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Letter from Anne Whitney, Milan, Italy, 1867 July 1

Anne Whitney

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Milano July 1 67

(11)

We have taken board for a few days with the
Contessa D'Avogadro - Such her title & degree - & the
fact that she does take boarders now & then, fully proves
the transience of earthly honors & fortune's favours.
But the Contessa, forgive me - I dwell on this
a little over a little, she keeps the first titled per-
sonage any I have lived with that seems to be insured
with certain & admirable properties & inextinguishable
virt. In phy. composition for the best of more or less
appearance. She is kind & good, if she is polite
graciously polite, I mean - as some one says - rich but
respectable - we in America are naturally suspicious
of politeness, we won the theory of virtue & luxury &
warm hearts into the ground - but we came by it is a
mystery if there was any original connection between
bad manners & good hearts. However, I do not need
to be tedious on this point & as it will be on the way
of self-discipline only that I shall resume the subject
at length on paper I will resume the direct yarn.
We started from Rome with the intention of a stop at
Viterbo & a time into Italy, as the nature of our wings admitted
of, but the dust of the road affecting me a little, after
the old fine dispute we concluded between Bologna &
to stop here for a week or two & look up the Cathedral
& the Milanese - while I will be making some
getting up the first crop of grass. A hotel was not
to be thought of (the judgment with which we conduct
ourselves on all occasions! the that which should call down
on us the respect & applause of our superiors & Belmont)
so we consulted the archives, looked out the old nobility
in fine presented ourselves to the Contessa D'Avogadro
for her hospitality - I told her that in America we
are all noblesse & A no 1 - & that in the best of us
I cd. command. She took it in good part, tho' it might
seem to cast a trifling shade of inferiority upon the Milanese
coats of arms, & we on here as aforesaid. It is fortunate
that we stopped for a little while, difficult as it
had been leaving Rome, returned after the day we came
here & it is necessary that she should keep quiet a few days.
The family is composed of a boy & girl, the eldest son, tall
fellow, the Austrian & the country husband is a big burly
man with a robust appetite, a good heart & is nearly
as we can discern this a less orderly, a good intelligence
has admirable ways - helps get up the dinner sets it on
the table - is not ashamed to perform any little humane
office that the moment demands - evidently his business is
in the house - but his dignity does not suffer - he is a
very nearly old gentleman.

The first appearance of Milan

highly, preparing for the contest, it offers down-
right louts - Rome & Florence certainly, & by reputation
other cities. It is difficult to convey to you decent
& self-respecting citizens of America the facts with
regard to foreign cities, & use language that shall not
offend - Paris is bad enough - Florence & Rome are detestable.
The men are like dogs, & of course the boys & children
generally, as worse if possible - The public provision
made, at intervals along the streets is a suggestion
& invitation that must effectually prevent the
cultivation of personal habits of order & decency.
& where liberty of this kind is accorded license
is taken so that no place is safe from the pollution.
The maddening openness of the precincts, & the
subversion of human refinement wh. it implies
are even more to be regretted than the offense
itself, wh. turns these interesting foreign cities
into a public urinal & makes certain places
less visited by the winds of heaven than others an
intolerable offense. Milan, I was going to say,
is clean - I have never seen so clean a looking
city to appear elsewhere. Yet even here
the officious stupidity of Custom & lord its
porticoes to the public, tho. they are made
at rarer intervals & in more out of the way
places, & yesterday in the heat of the noon-
day sun, our long window wh. looks out upon
a pleasant piece of quiet city landscape
was polluted by one of these licensed miscreants
several rods off. I have never seen any refuge
to this atrocious abomination in book or paper.
but it ought to be written about & carried into
France & England & all other nations so that
decency shall be made to smart as we have
under the strictures of foreign writers. As to the
of the French the most important people in
the sale of ^{circulation} ~~circulation~~ ^{circulation} ~~circulation~~
matters. Americans are belied of a thousand
flowers in comparison.

Some homeopathic med. I procured for Abby yesterday & M. procuring no effect. She is now being & mixture brought from home in wh. her father has much confidence. If she is not better tomorrow we must do the best we can in the way of a doctor. If she sh^d. be able we shall have her. I long to get her among the nuts. The interest of Milan centres in its Cathedral. It is not distinguished for its fine arts. but the frieze of the last supper by ^{the} Vinci is here in the convent of San ^{a small old grey} ~~Antonio~~ ^{Antonio} tho. almost obliterated by time & neglect. There is one gallery of much interest wh. we hope to see. The Cathedral is a lovely thing. In walking about the city its beautiful finish is well carried with statues & looks as if it were a noble almost break upon the sight over the roofs of the houses. 450 statues adorn the exterior. It is on Gothic brackets on every part of the building. You know perhaps that it is one of the largest churches of Europe. It is really within the corner besides the again into a Gothic shrine. She begins the great the lovely arches the evening service. we were witness of it all. The morning service wh. it is a little room made to make the circuit of. far larger than the base of our largest oak when it meets the ground look marvellously delicate seen thro the vista of the long nave & aisles. I stepped in last Sunday morning & in the short time I was there saw two vast congregations, either of wh. perhaps wd. have overfilled Mr. Beecher's Church. gather like ants to a plain & melt away again. In all these great churches there are many altars & while service is performing wh. life and soul seem to be away & all of for ought I know. at some one of them to a congregation of one or two or a half dozen or a thousand people as the case may be. the stronger walks about & reminds the pictures & statues without restriction & almost without notice. This is the distinguishing art here. & from all parts of the world to avoid them sides of the advantages offered. But no one begins to take it for this embarrassing wealth of head-organ & many gardens of the most insulting description wh. break in upon yr repose or conversation.

in an utterly remorseless way. Apparently to work
in sight in the short segment of this remnant
of a street from our window. Each one grinding as
if fatigue were among the things that never were.
While nobody minds them except perhaps the
unhappy poets & philosophers who sit within
tough to think too that head. offend right to
be suppressed. If you add to this that every
house about is the theatre of a music lesson
& that one thumps while another shrills in that
atrocious wh. devastates drawing rooms so much at
evening parties. You will understand a little what
it is to be in a musical city. But something comp
at least from combined effort. & in the season I
believe they do have the opera house in perfection.
Last night a band of five rods off performed very
admirably until midnight.

Monday 7th. A day is passing fast with a good appetite
but I had to call in a doctor first - an exp. one. Last
evening we took for an hour & again this A.M. We
are anxious to get away for several reasons. I had
are not one. We start on Tues. for Ancona. There
to some obstacle over the Simplon. From into Savoy.
Our journey further from Rome was very pleasant as
all travelling in Italy must be when there are no
special causes of discomfort. We took the cars
(1st class) at 8 P.M. & arrived at Ancona at 10 o'clock
the next day. Thence for 60 miles or so our course
lay along the shore of the Adriatic. The
weather was cool & delightful & it was a luxury
to watch for so long a time the colors of the glorious
sea. The landscape is endlessly changing. "It is
a goodly sight to see what Heaven hath done for
this delicious land." The whole campagna is yellow
lined with vines, brown from time to time & the trees
themselves wear the vines over their own foliage. The
Roman Campagna for two months or thereabouts until
the autumn winds set in, (no vines fall then) by
& Aug. is utterly grey & arid & the soil opens in great
seams wh. make it dangerous for the horse man or foot
man. When the rains come it is all green again. But
the country wh. we rode thro the other day is as green
as our fields after the last week in May. All the
way from Rome to Bologna we had a car that is a room.
a bed room & a kitchen. At B. we had to renew our tickets
& there being other passengers in the same car both ad from
there & the seat being so that we were more comfortable
in movement, & the seats being more comfortable. The
last part of the way was somewhat fatiguing. We arrived
at Milan at 8 P.M. I think the day here will be good for

us. It is fortunate that we had previously plan
to stop. Since as the court proves we shd. have been
obliged to do so, & might have been detained at a hotel.
There is no court I feel so much as that of books. not
for sitting simply, but for rest. we have not even
in the library, & if I show signs of forgetfulness of
the excellent & make astonishing blunders do not
be troubled nor ascribe it to a decay of amor
propter. We left our good hotel with a pang
of regret. The wed thoroughly good to the last
& the one station who has not tried to overcall
us. It is a melancholy fact that the Italians
have but one reputation among foreign residents viz.
they cannot be trusted. They are Jews. but
child. I it. No Jew was ever so foolish as they
in their hurry to get a little present advantage
risking all their future success. It is incom-
prehensible to the Saxon brain & in vain one
tries to make out. Is it Catholic? Is it Italian?
& what will cure it? A lady in Paris at some time
the only wife. She found William Henry & Ital-
was that the latter cheated in a thousand little
ways as the dog in the house. - the other in the dog. I have
tried & the former in the dog. - It may be, I have
seen enough of each at home. To make me
despise I hope in condemning a whole people
for the meanness wh. astonish me in the
few we have dealt with here. But it is true
nevertheless that we are growing very wary.
This A.M. we drove to the church of Santa Elena
della Gioia & adjacent to the cathedral, or as it
is called here, the Duomo. The chief attraction at
the church is the Last Supper by L. da Vinci, wh.
is not in the church itself but in a room in the
cloisters attached to it. The church always housed
their convents adjoining. But owing to their suppression
under the new gov. the buildings are generally
put to some other use. & here the monastic cant
looked something like a barn yard & the Chambers
surrounding are used as barracks. We found this
renowned picture on a large room here of everything
but the fresco's self & the easels of artists who
are copying it. The painting is so mutilated by
the feeling of the wall, that if the work of demo-
lition

goes on there will soon be nothing left of it. The sense of the reality of the scene as the artist conceived it is relieved when you look upon the very same well ~~by~~ ⁱⁿ the labor & thought. It is a very good & fine drawing. From there we went to the Duomo & saw a large congregation & heard a sermon the first since we were in Notre Dame. Admiring his strength to attempt it - I went alone to the top. Others were coming & going, but most of my party. It seems much more of a journey than the ascent of St. Peter's - short than one half of wh. is by a broad inclined plane up wh. a carriage might easily be driven. The Duomo is in the centre of Milan & the city is a pretty sight as seen from there with its tiled roofs & here & there a strange & beautiful church or a campanile. Milan is in the midst of a great plain - Lombardy, & wh. it is the capital - for 3/4 of the circuit the plain extends to the horizon - it is fertile green, peacefully wooded. The other 1/4 is bounded by the mts. of Italy. The walk over the steeple of the cathedral is a good half day's performance. It is a marble wilderness of spires & galleries. There, up in the blue air you are on a level with many of the statues that crown the pinnacles & above some & below others. It is a beautiful sight. The grand view always sweeping in thro' the branches & aisles of the delicate gothic forest. Miss Vatterville says, the Roman woman is the hardest animal in creation - but the Milanese going as we see them in their carriages, strike me as a much finer looking class. But here as elsewhere in Italy the numbers of cripples & dwarfs among the poor classes is a constant surprise. One can't get used to it. Such legs to be called legs, it is painful to behold. A man comes down the street I see him from our chamber window the lower half of him shaped in this way (1 - another is like this) - again another like this - another - The Dr. says it is scrofula & rickets, & due to deficient & unwholesome diet.

Leon. Italy. July 12. We stopped at

Arona from noon till midnight. Had there a 3 hour row upon the lake in the P.M. & visit to the Borromean castle on the opposite shore. This is a lovely old feudal looking affair abandoned to the care of a custodian of his family. The present family having left & a more modern residence at Leve Bella. I had a sort of green delight in it - never having seen anything of the sort save in Scott's novels. It is perched upon a cliff - only to be reached thro' climbing, or foot or mule - back - tho' the ascent is easy - by shallow grassy steps. I fancy the present Lord of Borromeo fore of whom is a cardinal the 3^d cardinal in the family since the 14th still do not enjoy going where their carriages can't take them. If I have not told you, by the way, about the carriages of the cardinals in Rome during the fester, it is an unpardonable omission. Resplendent in crimson & gold, gay as a carnival with each 3 footmen standing behind wearing like Harlequins colored & figured & flannel & calved. These lords of familiarity go about the earth. Each cardinal has two carriages one for himself one for his family. His family I presume includes his nephews! Of the Bishop of St. Praxed. I slipped in his speech & said, Lord! magnificent hooded of the largest breed loaded with gilded trappings proudly conscious of the apostolic freight. magnificent foreign in apostolic beads & prayer like peacocks whose wings are suppressed. It is a sight to see & makes one hopeful for the future of the church. On return to the castle the lands about wh. are richly cultivated. The vine the orange the lemon are there tho' these latter are covered in winter & a garden not at all station but like one of our own is full of the best flowers & bordered with

Mignonette in plants. It was good to see
 again a garden that might have belonged
 to an English or American place. The castle
 windows command magnificent views of the
 lake & mountains. & tho' the many aspect
 parts on all side accord to our modern
 ideas with nothing in them now but ~~the~~
 very attractive enormous old pictures. I thought
 I shd. have been content with a few friends
 & went off the owls & bats & domicile
 there for the season & not go a step
 further. Returning in the sunset light
 we saw the statue 60 feet high & ~~the~~ the
 head of wh. will hold 3 men of Saint
 Carlo Borromeo ^{wh.} standing upon one of
 the high hills that half gird the lake.
 One large hall in the castle is called the
 hall of justice. This carried me back to the
 day when the masters of this place were
 rulers of the whole country round. In another
 large chamber we found a frightened falcon
 that had found his way there thro' chimney
 or chink. & this again led back to the
 time when the pleasant green grassy
 court-yard sent out its companions of
 birds & leaves for the hunt. In fact it
 wd. not be difficult to grow touching by
 romantic in such a place & write another
 "Lark Song" say of the last Minister.
 At Arona we began seats in the Coupé
 for the ride from Arona to Sion.
 Our second experience in the body of a designer
 from Arona to Sion - the 1st having been over
 Mt. Coris. comparing the virtuous resolution
 never to ride in it - save when all other
 means fail - & divine shall fail us.
 The wretch or wretches who sit in the middle
 between two solid walls of flesh might as well
 be in the caves of Engadine - as well? better. The
 body is tortured & writhed - the spirits shall
 in sighs. This time we had two corners. but

I knew perfectly well what was the matter
 with the unhappy man beside me who
 groaned awfully & beat the air with his hat
 & head & otherwise testified that he had
 fallen into the dreariest stage of his existence.
 In the midst of my sympathy I only smiled.
 Who sits in the coupe is a degree further
 out of humanity. Tho' the shape of the seats
 is a joy to all repose. In or she can find
 a museum of relief in a pastoral & agreeable
 view of the country to one side. B is the
 body of the D.
 complete in front
 that it is perfect
 & 24 hours drive
 at either side
 & the front being
 side of the front. So that it is pretty nearly as
 good as riding in an open vehicle with the advantage
 of shelter & shade. The drawing is defective for
 must excuse it - as I have only the memory of the
 thing & not the thing itself. The wheels shd. be
 larger & the body of the vehicle not so low. The
 baggage behind is a good place for sleep.
 but it is very dirty & belongs to the best
 scrambler. ~~that~~ competition for a place
 is a little revolting. The Coupé is secured
 beforehand by paying a few francs extra.
 Sunday 14. Landau on the Lake Lemman
 would me with its long steep face. I see I
 have come on very slowly with my slugs &
 now as we are so far on the way ^{in our gait} it is best
 not to stop to tell you how much we enjoyed
 crossing into Italy by the Gotthard road
 & thence on to Sion, a very Swiss little town
 where is the Hotel Lion d'or against wh. we
 were all travelling. The pass of the Simplon
 is indeed a magnificent road & so good that all
 the way, there are but little sense of ascent



or descent. At the height of the Pass there
were places where we could have laid our hands
upon the snow, & yet it was not cold. We had
a young Genevan with us in the coupe who
spoke Eng. perfectly well & was a very pleasant
humble companion. There were flowers all
the way. The alpine rose is a bright crimson
flower wh. grows in clusters & of wh. I saw
a specimen alongside the deer forest. We met
whose delicate blue it was a joy to behold. I
have not as yet seen any mts. wh. taken me
up into the air quite in the way I expected. I
saw a few mountains in the distance. I saw
in comparison with these mountains which look
like blue shadows over London from down
to Lake Geneva. From the rail station was met
by a number of mountaineers & a lovely ride all along
the valley of the Rhone - the "Romany Rhone".
We arrived at Sin at 11 Thurs. night. Stayed
there 2 nights & left at 10 o'clock. After. Mon.
after a magnificent view. 3 1/2 hours by rail
thru. Such beauty as only the hills country
affords brought us here, where we intended to
stay only one night. But in accordance with
the spirit & character of our wanderings our
stops are somewhat capricious. Why we
came to Chaudron, kept neither of us perhaps
could say. But it was not why we came to this
particular Hotel & Pension Bellevue to
pass a day & night & then go on to them.
The commencement of the Bernese Oberland.
But when we came here, Beholding how good
the place both appears. And the prospect how
sweet, it is easily understood why we put down
stakes & spent as much as we could to the sea. Thus
for & no farther. Here is board of the 1st cl.
hotel quality for 4 1/2 fr. per day. Here is
a lofty tower planted in Eng. fashion with
very beautiful things, including several roses &
Jessemines fronting the mts & the lake.
Here is a house that looks as if it were

wiped up every day with freshly-washed linen
pocket handkerchiefs. I have also of wh.
the sole apparent proprietors & proprietors are
two lovely women, one of whom speaks English.
Every Ital. hotel has a couple of 6 or 10 men,
keepers - or, each of whom has charge of
some one of the weak-side departments of
innocent strangers. It is disgusting. London
the beautiful old town is on one side of us &
trees, lawns, villas around & below. This
week we shall start down towards Vevey
& Chillon wh. we passed coming up. To see
if we can discern traces of those enterprising
explores, the Phoenicians, or hear of J. B. B. B.
who was near Montseux. We do not feel
as if we were on a foreign strand. American
is spoken everywhere. & over one house we
saw the stars & stripes waving in company
with 2 other flags. The birds sing here as
they do at home in May. & never a worm
in all the land, not even at the heart of
the rose. What a country it is! As soon
forgetful of the Pyramids & of all that the
heart seen between Sicily & Sicily says it
throws Italy into the shade. Of course then
I feel it even better on me to take up the argument
where we are edified by the sound of the church
going bells. & I do think to go together to the
Roth with the goodly company wh. we see
exploding from the ch. of the town over the
Grand Port. But then (there is an Eng. church
here) to go & listen to a stiff Genevan sermon
wh. put me into a much less sabbatic frame
of mind than to commune with you my own
Dear Sarah & the dear all, here on the Swiss
stage, where only the tops of the trees break
the stillness with their musings of peace.
Moreover the post must be here this way
to day. I had a letter from home at Chillon.

& there must be a letter for me from you
at Rome wh. will be another week old bef.
I can get it.

Ady sends her dearest love. You
must feel no anxiety now in regard to our well-
being. We have no disposition to climb Mts.
or make long pedestrian tours & then seem
to be so enveloped in an atmosphere about as hot
as in Rome. The cold w. threatened of and
during the early diligence ride has again
vanished. & I hope to see no more of it. &
that will be a precious good hidden
for this summer. These few touches
I have been evolving the best we
do in regard to letters, & conclude that
it will be better to leave them sent here
than round by way of Rome. Th. in all
probability we shall be off bef. an express
to this car arrives. I shall get money
from Sigismund Marcel (Banker)
& may direct letters to his care
Lausanne - Suisse - for Switz. as you
Love & blessing to you all.

If this letter were not behind time
I shd. write to Lizzie by it - but
must wait.